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ABSTRACT

This theme issue focuses on corn. Iowa is the number one corn producing state in the United States. The featured articles in the issue concern, among other topics, Iowa children who live on farms, facts and statistics about corn, the Mesquakie Indians and corn shelling, corn hybrids, a short story, and the corn palaces of Sioux City. Activities, short biographies, and puzzles and games also are included. (DB)

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Volume 14, Number 3 Spring 1993

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CORN

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Wild Rosie's Timeline

1975	Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa, created to save vegetable and fruit seeds from extinction
1940s	Harvesting machines increase corn production
1920s and 1930s	National corn husking contests
1926	Iowan Henry A. Wallace establishes Pioneer Hi-Bred Corn Company
1900s	Scientists creating hybrids
1887	First Sioux City Corn Palace built
1870s	Hybrid corn experiments begin
1846	Iowa becomes a state
1837	John Deere invents steel plow

1492	Taino Indians introduce corn to Columbus
1000 B.C.	Evidence of corn from this period in Southwest (Arizona)

THE Goldfinch

Volume 14, Number 3
Spring 1993

EDPRESS

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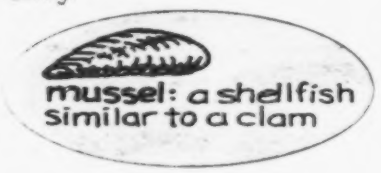
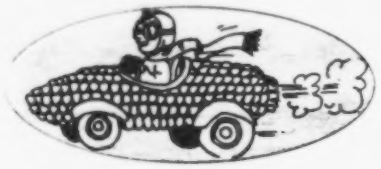
On the Cover: Phyllis Gott and her son David, 3, on their farm in Ollie, Iowa. Taken in 1958, the photo shows the corn harvested by friends and family.



SPECIAL FEATURE
Corn Dictionary
Your key to understanding words and phrases throughout the issue



It looks like a newspaper! Read all about it—corn that is!
See page 8.

Check out the new joke page on page 29!

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Story and photos by Millie K. Frese

Q: Why can't you tell secrets in a corn field?
A: Because corn has ears!

David Frazier of Van Horne, Iowa, talks about growing corn in the 1990s.

Iowa farmers grow a lot of corn. While some farmers raise corn as a cash crop, others grow it as feed for their livestock. Either way, corn production is a job which often involves every member of the family.

David Frazier, 12, is a sixth grader at Benton Community Middle School in Van Horne. He lives with his parents, Bill and Paula Frazier, and two older sisters on a 1,900-acre farm north of town. About half of their land is devoted to raising corn—both field and seed corn. The Fraziers also raise beans and pigs because, David says, "you can't make a living off of just corn."

Kari Krogmann, 11, is the daughter of Bob and Janet Krogmann of rural Manchester.

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Helping to raise dairy cattle is just one of Kari Krogmann's chores.

She has two brothers and one sister, and is in fifth grade at St. Mary's Elementary School in Manchester. The Krogmanns raise dairy cattle on a 386-acre farm. Of the 250 **tillable** acres, 130 are in corn.

If corn listened, here's what those ears would hear David and Kari say about growing corn and life on the farm.We first talked with David:

How long have and your family farmed?

DAVID: I've farmed all my life, and my dad's been a farmer all of his life. We farm where my dad's parents used to farm—my dad and my uncle farm it together.

What are your jobs during corn growing season?

I drive the tractor a lot, and I help during planting. When we pick seed corn, I help haul the wagons back and forth.

Once the corn is planted, are you finished with it until harvest?

No. Once the corn gets to a certain height, you've got to spray it with chemicals mixed with water to kill weeds. Buttonweed, horseweed—there's a ton of them! And you have to get rid of them because weeds take all the water from the corn.

Anything else you do before harvest?

For seed corn, we have to detassel. That's pulling the tassels out of just the male rows. We have to rogue the seed corn, too. Roguing is taking out corn plants that aren't growing right or are from last year's seed that didn't come up until this year. We use hoes or spades to dig it out.

What is the harvest like?

We harvest field corn with a combine. It takes the corn off the cob and throws the cob back onto the field. We dry our own corn, then store it in a bin. It's got to be dried down to a certain level of moisture.

Do you keep any of the corn you grow?

We used some of our field corn to feed the pigs. We also bale the cornstalks into those big, round bales. We use them to keep the pigs warm in the winter.

Do you want to be a farmer for the rest of your life?

Yes. I want to be a farmer because that's how I grew up. But I wouldn't mind taking the winters off. Cleaning hog pens in the winter gets pretty cold.

Kids on the Farm (continued)

Karl, what is a typical day's routine for you?

Karl: In the summertime, I get up and go outside to scrape down the parlor after the cows are milked. We clean parlors out with a power washer. Then I help Mom finish with the calves. We give them their milk replacement and sometimes have to bottle feed them.

What are "parlors?"

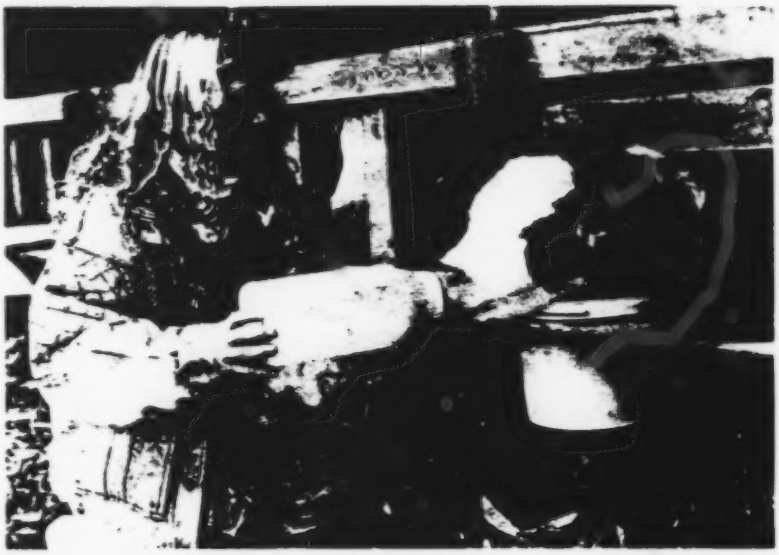
That's where we milk the cows. There are stalls for eight cows at a time to stand—kind of in a circle. There's a lower level in the middle for someone to stand and hook them up to the milker. We milk the cows at night, too. But it is after the morning milking that we clean the parlors.

What happens to the milk?

It goes into a tank, then the milkman comes and takes it to the creamery. We take what we want out of the tank to drink.

Does raising corn add to the chores you do?

Sometimes—mostly when it's time to pick. When it's spring, Dad works up the field and gets the planter ready to go. He puts fertilizer in with the seed to help the corn grow. It takes five or six days to do all the planting. The corn grows, then Dad cultivates it.



When she's not feeding calves, Karl Krogmann of rural Manchester pitches in to help her family with the corn harvest.

How do you help with the harvest?

It's time to pick the corn . . . when it's taller than Dad! He gets the combine out and goes out into the field. My older brother, Jeff, helps him out there. And Mom does, too. I help more around the house . . . folding clothes and making lunch and supper while they're in the field.

Riding the four-wheeler is the most fun. The snowmobile is fun, too—when there's a lot of snow. And I like to go sledding.

What do you like to cook?

Soup, because it's easy. And pizza! When they're out picking, I have to take sandwiches out to them. We have a four-wheeler to ride out on. That's a lot of fun!

What else do you do during harvest?

Sometimes I get in the wagon with the corn to help push it into the **auger**. The auger takes the corn

auger: a tool for making holes in the earth

to the bin where it dries. Then it gets moved into other bins.

How long does it take to get all of the corn picked?

About three weeks.

What do you do with it once it's picked and dried?

We use most of it to grind feed for the cows.

Is living on a farm all work?

No, we get to play for awhile! I play the piano, and I like to go outside and play in the **haymow** or on the swingset. And ride my bike. Riding the four-wheeler is the most fun. The snowmobile is fun, too—when there's a lot of snow. And I like to go sledding.

I don't really want to live on a farm—it's too hard of work! But I don't want to live in town either. I like living in the country.

Do you want to live on a farm the rest of your life?

I don't really want to live on a farm—it's too hard of work! But I don't want to live in town, either. I like living in the country. It's not as crowded with door-to-door neighbors. In the country there's space to do what you want to do. ¥

haymow: a loft in a barn or stable that is used for storing hay

Unlike Kari Krogmann, David Frazier, plans to make a career out of farming. But he says he "wouldn't mind taking the winters off." Cleaning the hog pens gets pretty cold in Iowa!

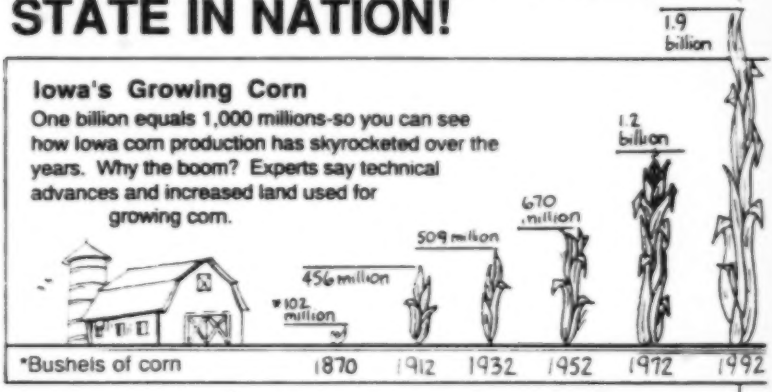
bushels: a unit of volume for measuring grain, fruit and vegetables. It equals 32 quarts

Corn News

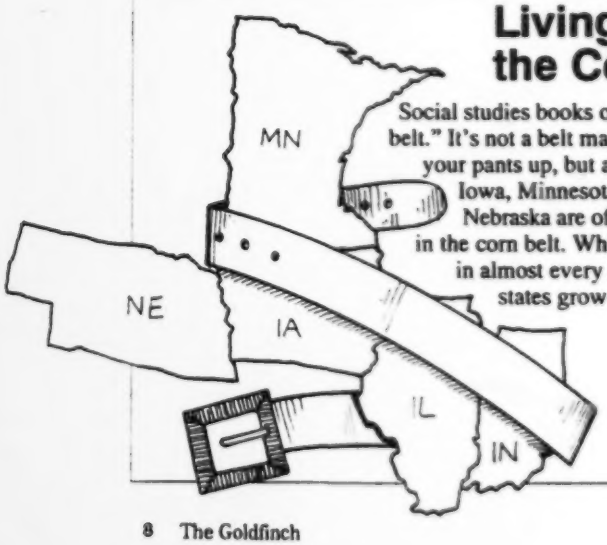
IOWA #1 CORN PRODUCING STATE IN NATION!

Corn is big business in Iowa. Corn production in Iowa has quadrupled since 1929, from 400 million **bushels** to approximately 1.7 billion bushels annually. Look out the car window when you're out and about in the state and you're sure to see corn fields. More than one-third of the total land area of Iowa is used to produce corn. You may not see flocks of farmers, but eight out of ten jobs in Iowa are directly or indirectly related to agriculture.

Today there are more than 360 different uses for corn products. You can find corn products in stuff like paint, paper products, batteries, clothing, mouthwash, and shampoo! More than 1,200 different food items in U.S. supermarkets products are made from corn. Now you know why people sing, "Io-way, Io-way, that's where the tall corn grows!"



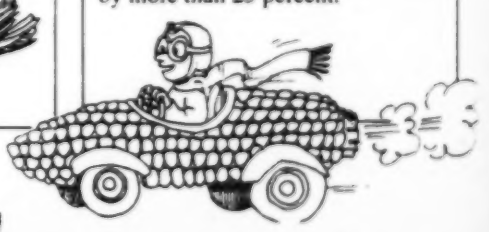
Living in the Corn Belt



Social studies books often mention the "corn belt." It's not a belt made out of seeds to keep your pants up, but an area of the Midwest. Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Nebraska are often mentioned as states in the corn belt. While some corn is grown in almost every state in America, these states grow huge amounts of corn.

Fueling the Nation

Part of Iowa's corn goes into gasoline! This product is called ethanol (eth-AH-nol) and it's a fuel that's made up of 90 percent gasoline and 10 percent ethanol. Iowa produces about one fourth of the nation's ethanol. Ethanol may help lower carbon monoxide emissions (a kind of air pollution) by more than 25 percent.



Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

brine:
salty water

Indian's Gift

Where did this wonderful food the color of gold come from? Historians trace the beginning of corn to what is now Mexico and the Caribbean. The Taino Indians who met Christopher Columbus in the West Indies in 1492 introduced the Italian explorer to "maize." For the next 20 years Spanish and Portugese explorers spread the seeds throughout the world. To European Americans, maize was one of the most important gifts ever received from Indian cultures. To European Americans it was a cherished food.

But to the Indians, corn is a sacred object. Special festivals are held to honor it. Today (see page 10) Mesquakie Indians in Iowa hold special ceremonies for harvesting corn.

Munching Around the World

How do people around the world eat corn?

Americans: Corn-on-the-Cob is a fave, especially with slabs of butter and a few shakes of salt. You'll also find corn in soups and bread.
Iranians: Roast the corn, then soak it in brine.
Mexicans: When it's not ground into tortillas, Mexicans add some ground chili pepper for a hot cob!
Chinese: Soy sauce, please!
Southeast Asians: Brush their corn with salted coconut milk.

Ask Goldie

1. Why do we grow corn in Iowa?
The **weather** and **soil** are great for growing corn. Iowa has some of the best soil in the world.

2. Are there different kinds of corn?
Sweet corn is grown and sold as a **canned** or **frozen** vegetable. **Popcorn** is used for popping as a snack food. **Field corn** is the most common type and is processed into foods for humans and feeds for animals. **Seed corn** is field corn grown just for seeds.

3. How does corn grow?
Corn is the tallest member of the **grass** family. Corn produces a flower (or **tassel**) and is pollinated naturally by pollen falling onto the silks of the ear. A fully grown ear of corn has as many as 600 to 1,000 corn kernels on it.

—Iowa Corn Promotion Board

Corn Contest

Rosie: Shh. . . I think I hear something. If you're standing in a corn field on a hot summer day, there's a good chance you'll hear a "ssss" sound. It's the corn talking! Write and tell us what makes the noise when corn grows and the first five correct answers will receive free subscriptions to *The Goldfinch*.

Send your answers to: **Shh. . .**
I Hear-the-Corn-Growing Contest
The Goldfinch, 402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Corn Shelling with the Mesquakies

by Susanna Ashton

Corn-on-the-cob isn't for everyone. Some people like to eat canned corn that has been scraped off the cob by machines. But how did people get corn kernels off the cob before machines, or even metal tools, were used? That's where the clam shells come in.

Many different Indian tribes have grown corn for thousands of years. Every tribe has its own way of preparing corn. Many tribes, like the Mesquakie Indians of Iowa, use clam shells taken from nearby rivers as the perfect tools for this job. A clam shell is easy to hold and just the right shape for scraping kernels off quickly and easily.

Shelling Corn With Shells

Corn shelling isn't just another boring chore for the Mesquakie. Corn shelling is an important part of their culture. Today many traditional people often gather to do it. It used to be mostly women, but when Mesquakie get together these days to shell corn it's usually a family activity with everyone involved.

SHSI

A Mesquakie woman tends to her corn in early 20th century Iowa. Today some Mesquakie Indians still shell corn in the traditional way.

ii

Juanita Pudhill, shelled corn in 1976 with an Iowa Mesquakie family, and described it:

> During August, green corn is gathered, husked, and boiled in large iron kettles over the open fire. The kernels are removed from the cob and laid out on large sheets of plastic to dry in the sun. It is then stored for winter use. It was the uncle's job to keep the fire and pots going. The corn was put in to boil at a certain time in the afternoon to make sure that things would be ready when the children were home from school. The harvest ceremony is for all members of the family to take part in. We all gathered in the front room, most of us sitting on the floor with a large old tablecloth draped over our legs. Everyone chose a mussel shell which would fit well into the palm of his or her hand. I, being, right-handed, chose the shell to fit in that hand. The shell lies between the thumb and forefinger, with the sharp edge down. You press the sharp edge down in between the rows of kernels and pry them out. The kernel must not be cut in removing it from the ear. The next day, the corn was laid out to dry and after drying, it would be put into containers ready for winter use.
>
> A game is played to see how many kernels can be removed without breaking them apart. On this particular evening the grandmother won every time. Everyone laughed and was happy for her. The TV was on in the background and the younger ones were watching it. But my friend and I sat side-by-side and filled our tablecloths with kernels of the beautiful red, purple, and white corn.

mussel: a shellfish similar to a clam

Some Indian families like to use metal spoons or knives to shell the corn, because they think it is easier than using or finding clam shells. But other families believe that using shells is not just a way of practicing tradition, but is a way to respect the corn. Corn is considered sacred and every single kernel is considered to be alive, just like a human being. Scraping with shells, instead of knives is "gentler" on the kernels and does not cut them open as it pulls them off the cob. So using shells to shell corn isn't a corny idea at all!

Ask Yourself

- **How do some Mesquakie Indians shell corn?**
- **Why do some Mesquakies believe that shelling corn is an important tradition?**
- **What are some of the traditions in your family that have to do with food?**

Buel Lathrop's Big Adventure

Most Iowa pioneers raised corn, and they needed a place to grind it into grain

by Kathleen M. Hays

Buel Lathrop had big ideas. In 1848 the early Dallas County settler bought a **stump mill** and hauled the works to his land near Hickory Creek. At the time, most pioneer farmers raised corn as their primary crop. They carried their corn to **gristmills** to have it ground into corn meal. Lathrop dreamed of building such a place.

So he dug a ditch across a sharp bend in the creek where it dropped downhill. Then he constructed a waterwheel at the lower end of the millrace and a log building to house the millstones. He diverted the water from the creek to flow through the millrace to the wheel. As the wheel turned, it turned the stones and ground the corn.

Early Iowa farmers used gristmills like this one to grind their corn.

Cornmeal mush with maple syrup

It was hard work for one person, but Lathrop could take pride in having the first water-powered gristmill in the county. With a mill just down the creek, children were sent off with a bag of corn after morning chores and expected back in time for a dinner of crisp-fried corncakes or cornmeal mush with maple syrup.

The waterwheel Lathrop built was a wheel which stood in an upright position like a ferris wheel. The pressure of the water against the wheel caused it to turn and finally move the millstones.

Like the ox and plow, the watermill was a basic tool of Iowa pioneers. A man like Lathrop could build a gristmill from trees he cut down himself and use water from his own creek for power. Small mills like his became centers of activity for Iowa communities. Roads and bridges were built to them, and towns eventually grew up around the mills.

The people who brought their corn to Lathrop's mill are long gone. The millstones are once again prairie rocks, and no trace of the millrace remains in the black soil of Hickory Creek. But if you stand at the bend in the creek and close your eyes tightly, you can almost hear the rhythmic slap of water against the wheel, and catch the faint smell of fresh cornmeal.

Ask Yourself

1. What did gristmills do in pioneer Iowa?

2. Why were gristmills important to Iowa?

3. How is going to the gristmill with a bag of corn different from going to the grocery store to get food?

Knee high by the Fourth of July? That's the height corn plants are supposed to be according to some folks. But Iowa corn is always much taller! An Iowa farmer and his son check out the height of their corn in 1958. The use of hybrid corn increased the amount and quality of corn produced by farmers.

Coveralls, Seed Caps, and Big Corn

The scoop on hybrids

Walk into any small Iowa town these days and you'll be sure to bump into coverall-clad farmers proudly wearing their seed caps. Look at the color of their caps. The big corn seed companies each have their own special color. Green caps come from Pioneer Hi-Bred International in Des Moines. The Garst & Thomas Hybrid Corn Company of Coon Rapids makes blue-and-white caps. Most seed companies advertise their multi-million dollar businesses with seed caps. But it wasn't always such a big business.

Indians, the first growers of corn, developed several varieties of corn seed by planting the largest and best grain. In pioneer

Coveralls, Seed Caps, and Big Corn *(continued)*

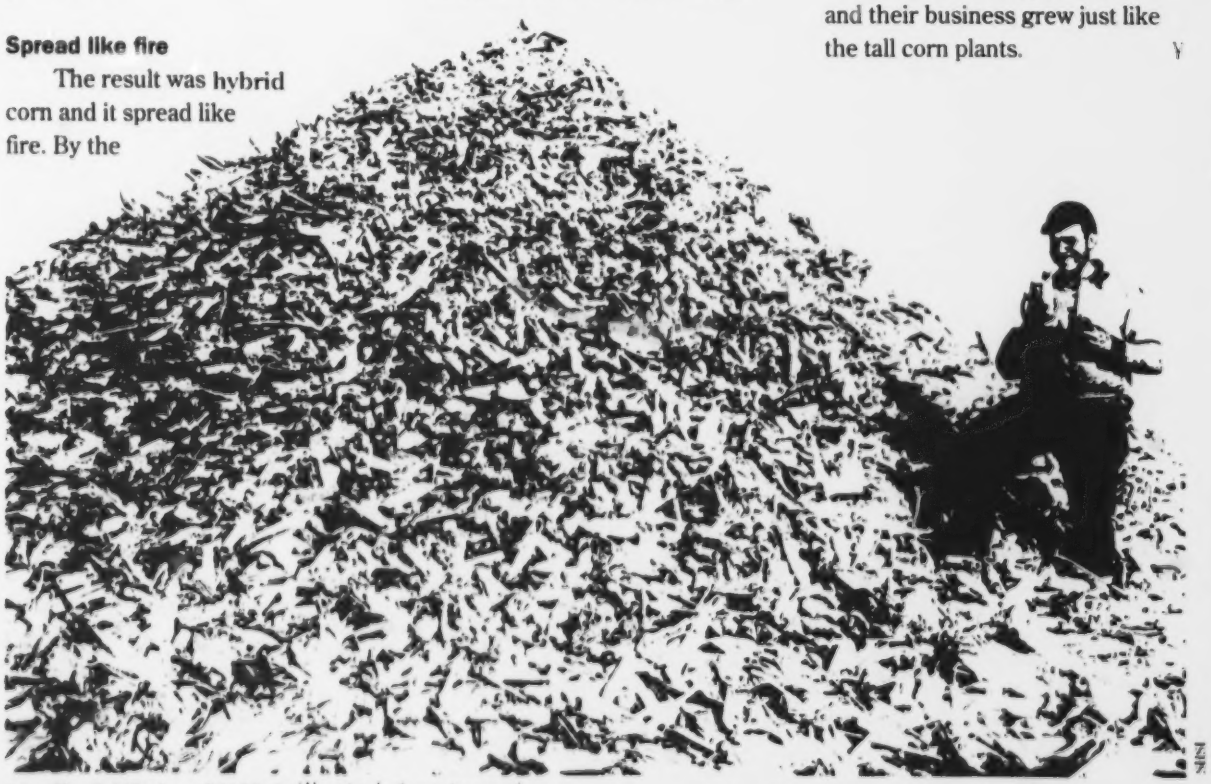
Iowa, corn grew after it was naturally pollinated. Different kinds of pollen flew around the field. The resulting corn wasn't very resistant to problems with the soil, pests, or bad weather. By the 1870s, scientists began seriously experimenting with seeds. They cross-pollinated certain types of seeds to produce corn that was highly resistant to environmental problems.

Spread like fire

The result was hybrid corn and it spread like fire. By the 1940s, hybrid corn made up almost 80 percent of all corn grown in the United States. Twenty years later 95 percent of all corn was hybrid. What was the big deal? BIG YIELDS. The new hybrid corn seed resulted in three times more corn in 1981 than in 1931 on one-third fewer acres.

Business people like Henry A. Wallace, who founded Pioneer in 1926, publicized the news about hybrid corn. "The best hybrids of the future will be so much better than the best hybrids of today that there will be no comparison," he wrote in 1932. He was right. Today, Pioneer sells 645 million pounds of seed corn a year and operates research stations in 90 countries around the world.

Iowa seed companies like Pioneer and Garst developed highly successful types of seeds and their business grew just like the tall corn plants.



cross-pollinated: fertilized by another species or variety

hybrid: the offspring of different varieties of plant or animal

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

Scrambled Corn

Unscramble the words related to corn. Then take the circled letters and unscramble them to discover the mystery word. Answers on page 30.

BOC ___ ___ (___)

NROCOPP ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ (___) ___

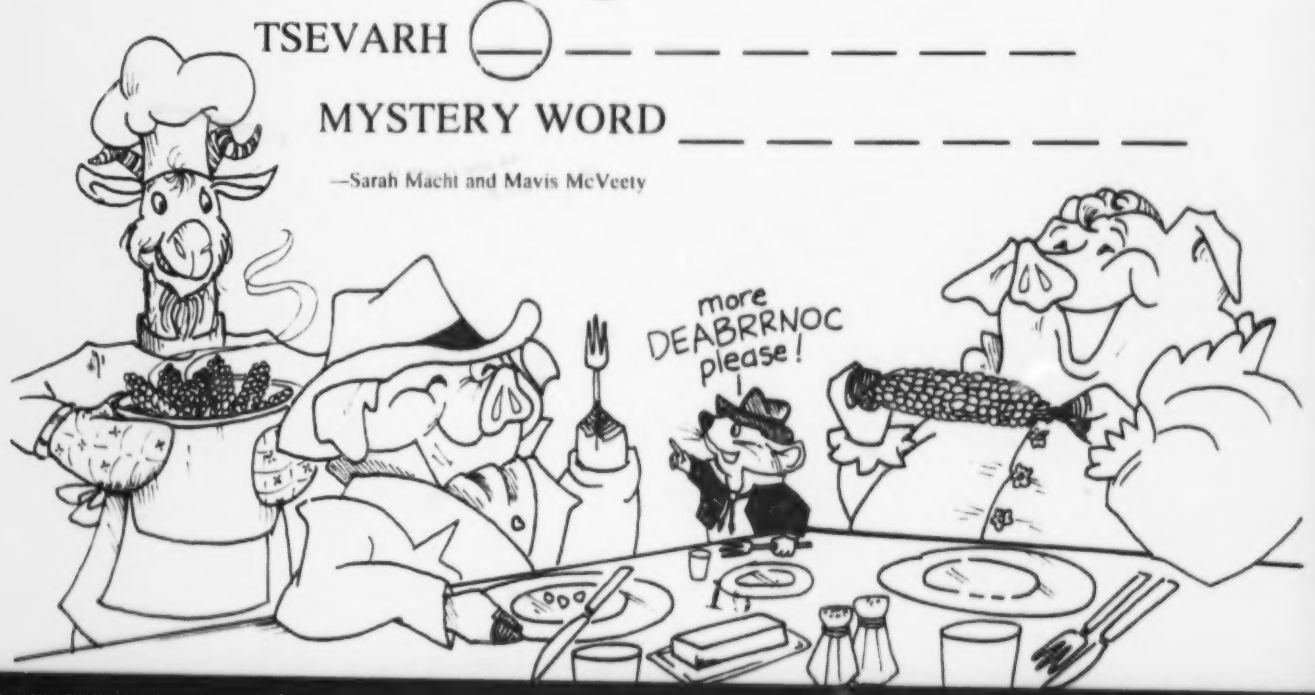
DEABRRNOC ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ (___)

IEDLY (___) (___) ___ ___ ___

TSEVARH (___) ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

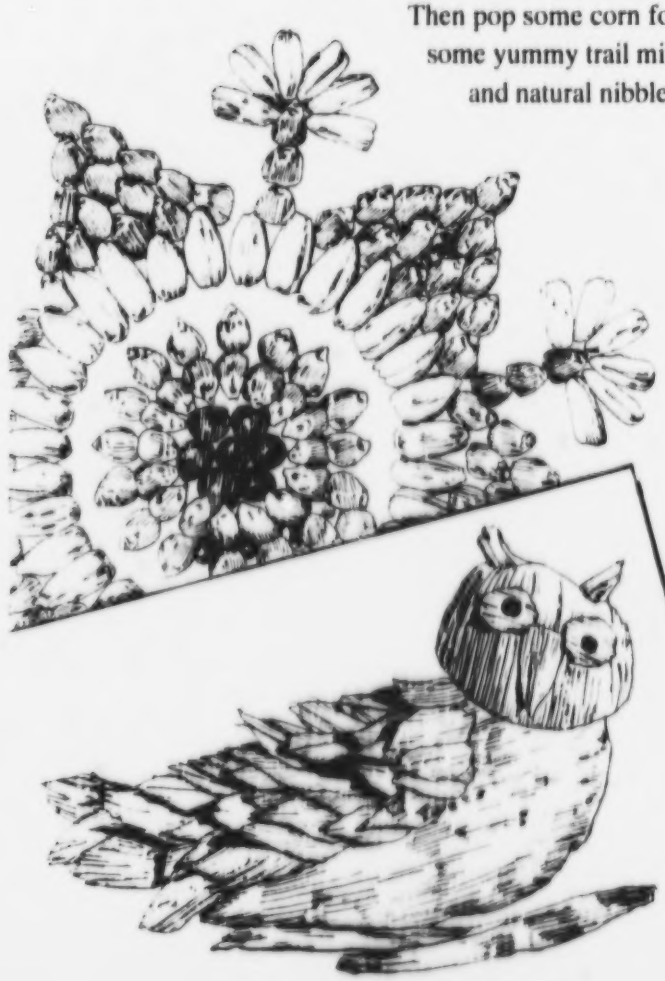
MYSTERY WORD ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

—Sarah Macht and Mavis McVeety



A-MAIZE-ing Corn Thingamajigs

Follow these easy directions
to make your own corn-y crafts.
Then pop some corn for
some yummy trail mix
and natural nibble!



Corn Seed Picture

Colored popcorn doesn't have to pop to have a good time. Check your local grocery store to see if it carries colored, or Indian popcorn. Make a corn seed Goldfinch or anything you want.

Materials

glue	strong cardboard
toothpicks	corn seeds
pencil	paper cup or plate

Directions

1. Using a pencil, draw a picture on the cardboard. Don't worry about unwanted pencil or eraser marks because you will be "coloring" over them with corn seeds.
2. When your drawing is finished, pour a small amount of glue into a paper cup or onto a paper plate.
3. Dip one end of a toothpick into the glue and apply the glue to a spot inside your drawing.
4. Take a corn seed and carefully place it on the glue.
5. Continue repeating steps 3 & 4 and watch your drawing come alive with color. Your picture is complete when your drawing is filled in with seeds.

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

Corn-Husk Sculptures

What would you like to sculpt out of corn husks? Perhaps Rosie or Goldie? Or how about your house or your own face? Look for corn husks at your local craft store.

Materials

scissors
glue
corn husks
pencil
thumbtack
background material such as cardboard with burlap or felt glued on top

Directions

1. Draw your design onto the background material.
2. Cut the corn husks into pieces with scissors. Think of your sculpture as if it were a puzzle.
3. You can leave the husks flat or curl them by wetting a strip of husk and wrapping it around a pencil. Push a thumb tack through the husk, into the pencil and let the husk dry before using it on your sculpture.
4. Put a small amount of glue on a strip of husk and then place the husk onto your drawing.
5. Keep gluing husks onto your drawing. Be creative! Overlap husks to create feathers or use curled husks to make curly hair.

Have an adult help you with these recipes from The Popcorn Insitute:

Popcorn Trail Mix

8 ounces raisins
6 ounces diced fruits (apricots, apples, raisins, whatever combo you like)
2 quarts popped popcorn

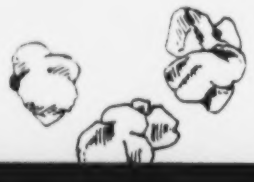
Follow the directions to pop popcorn.
Remove unpopped kernels.
Combine diced fruit, raisins, and popcorn.
Toss until mixed.

Tropical Popcorn Punch

2 ounces flaked coconut
4 ounces dried pineapple cut into small pieces
2 ounces dried dates, diced
2 quarts popped popcorn

Combine coconut, pineapple pieces, dates and popcorn. Toss until mixed.
Makes 2 quarts.

—Lisa Mann Sinclair



The Cornhusking Caper

By Jen Guttenfelder

Alice was the best corn husker in Linn Grove. She wanted to enter the county contest, but there was one problem. She was a girl.

Look at all of this cool old stuff!" said Emily Warren as she and her brothers, and their cousin Abbie from Des Moines explored the old corn crib.

"It just looks like a bunch of rusty old junk to me," said Abbie.

"Ohhhh, what's this? It looks like something a gross creature would wear in a scary movie!" shrieked Abbie. She picked up a right-handed leather glove covered with little round metal pricks. Right in the middle of the palm was a large rusty sharp metal piece that looked like a two-pronged knife.

"Wow!" said Edward, as he grabbed the leather glove from Abbie. "I wonder what this was used for?"

"Something awful I bet," said Emily.

"Yeah," said Zack. "I'll bet it was used to kill something . . . or someone!" He dangled the glove.

Abbie gulped and her eyes widened.

"Killers who hide out in corn cribs!" whispered Zack.

Abbie screamed and ran outside. Emily, Zack, and Edward giggled.

"Wait up, Abbie," said Zack. The Warren kids followed their cousin out of the corn crib and headed for the house. The old corn crib looked like an old red barn, but it was used as a big storage bin. It was one of their favorite places to hang out.

"Let's go ask Grandpa what it is," said Emily.

The Warrens lived on an 80-acre farm near Linn Grove, Iowa. The farm had been in their family for almost 100 years. Their dad, Ben, used all modern equipment now, but many old farming tools and machines reminded Grandpa of when he was a kid living on the farm.

The grown-ups sat in the family room talking farm business. The children took off their coats and followed Edward quietly into the room. Edward took the glove from Zack and held it up.

"Grandpa, what's this?" he asked.

"Did they use it for murder?" asked Zack before Grandpa could answer. Grandpa and the adults laughed.

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

"That's a cornhusking mitt," answered Grandpa. "We used that to husk corn."

"You mean it's not a weapon to protect you from wild animals?" asked Abbie.

Grandpa shook his head. "We didn't have combines when I was a kid, so we had to pick and husk the corn by hand. Some people were so good at it, they entered cornhusking contests. People came from miles around to watch or be in the contests. It was a real big sport, back when I was a kid," said Grandpa.

"Were you ever in a cornhusking contest, Grandpa?" asked Emily.

"No, I had very weak wrists. But I know someone who was!" He winked at Grandma.

"Arthur!" cried Grandma. "You promised you wouldn't!"

"Oh, Alice. Go ahead and tell them!"

"Tell us!"

"C'mon, Grandma!"

"It's supposed to be a secret," said Grandma. She looked at Grandpa with a consenting smile and nod.

"Okay, okay," said Grandpa laughing. "Back in the early thirties, your grandma and I were 11 years old, about your age, Edward. We all learned how to husk corn. Harvesting corn, you see, was a family project because it took so long. Everyone pitched in.

"One day your grandma and I were watching my pa husk. Our families lived by each other and often helped each other out. Grandma Alice asked my pa to teach her how to husk, so he found a mitt small enough for her hand and taught her how . . . . "

"Okay, Alice," said James Warren. "Grab the ear of corn right in the middle with your left hand. Use that hook on your right hand to pull aside the husks and then grab them with your left hand. Good, like that, Alice. Now turn your wrist quick and break the ear of corn away from the husks. Now to go faster, throw the husked ear into the wagon, and grab for another ear with your left hand while you're throwing with your right hand. Bounce the ear of corn off the bangboard. That's what it's there for."

"I can do this!" thought Alice.

At first, Alice was a little slow and awkward. She wasn't used to having a hook attached to her right hand. The dry corn leaves scratched her face. The early morning cold made her nose run and her fingers dry and crack. But Alice was determined. She didn't give up.

One day Alice came home with a bleeding scratch on her face and sore hands.

"Alice, have you been fighting with the boys?"

"Oh, no, Father. I've been working right alongside them at the Warren's. I'm husking corn. Mr. Warren says I'm getting pretty good at it."

"Husking corn with the boys and men?" asked Father.

"I'm not sure that's such a good idea," said Mother.

"Please, don't make me stop," begged Alice. "I'm just getting good at it."

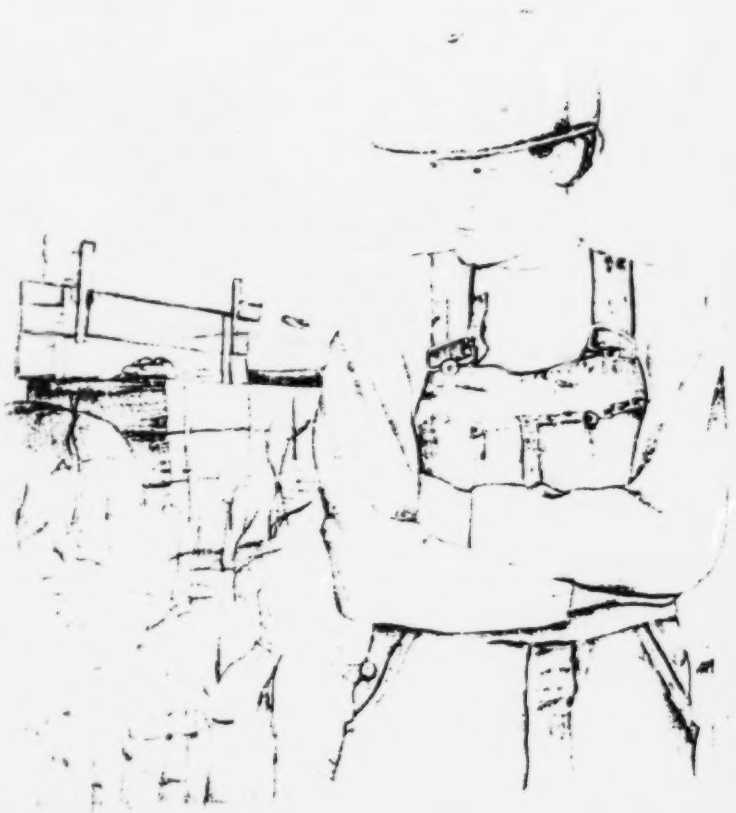
"I could use some help in *my* field," said Father.

"Can I help Father with husking? Please?" cried Alice.

Mother sighed. Even though she disapproved, she knew how stubborn Alice could be. "Okay," she consented.

Father and Alice laughed. Deep down Father was proud that his girl was a hard worker who could keep up with the men. He couldn't wait to brag about her to his friends.

The rest of the harvesting season, Alice husked corn with her father. She got to be very good. One day she even husked more corn than one of the hired men.



Mary Moye-Rowley

"Giminy!" cried Amos, the hired man. "Alice has husked more corn than me today!"

"Good job, sweet pea," said Father.

"You should enter the county cornhusking contest," said Amos. "There's a Junior Division."

"Can I, Father?" asked Alice with wide eyes. "Please!"

"I wish you could, Alice," said Father. "You'd give the boys your age a real run for their money. But girls don't usually participate in the husking contests. Besides, I'm sure your mother would never let you."

Alice was so disappointed that her cornhusking slowed down to a crawl. At the end of the day, Alice went over to Arthur's. Maybe he could cheer her up.

"Arthur, do you think it would

shock everybody if I was in the county cornhusking contest?" asked Alice, as they sat on the porch swing. "Everybody already knows how fast I am because Amos and Father tell everyone. Why can't I compete with the boys? I work with them."

"I don't know, Alice," said Arthur. "There are just some things that girls aren't supposed to do in public. This is one of them. . . ."

"But what if I'm invisible?" she asked with a mischievous smile

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

Alice and Arthur talked about making Alice invisible all the way home.

On the morning of the cornhusking contest, Alice met Arthur behind the outhouses. He gave her a bundle wrapped in brown paper and tied with a string. She took it, smiled, and then darted into an outhouse. When she came out, her dress and hair ribbons were gone. She wore a pair of too-big denim overalls. One of Arthur's caps held her hair tucked underneath it. From that moment on, she was "Alan."

Alan wandered through the crowd of people. She was a little afraid that someone would recognize her, so she walked with her eyes down. She knew her disguise worked when she bumped into Amos.

"Hey, kid! Watch where you're going!" he cried.

Alan couldn't believe how many people came to the county Battle of the Bangboards. Wagons and buggies lined up in dozens of rows. Food booths sold hot dogs, pies, cakes, and souvenirs. Displays showed new farm equipment and hybrids of seed corn. Newspaper reporters, photographers, and radio broadcasters scuttled about interviewing people and taking notes.

Alan was nervous when her name was called for the Juniors Division. People were surprised to see a stranger competing for Linn Grove in the contest. Alan remembered all of the advice Father and Mr. Warren gave her and quickly found her rhythm. Bang! bang! bang! The corn flew against the bangboard like bullets.

"Where's Alice?" said her father as Alan husked.

"I can't believe she's missing this," said her mother.

"Yeah, Alan!" cheered Arthur.

Some people in the crowd gasped when the stranger named "Alan" won. After the trophies were awarded, everyone wanted to congratulate the new champion, but Alan had disappeared.

A little while later, Alice caught up with her parents and Arthur. Her hands and face were just as clean as they had been that morning when she left the house and her dress and hair ribbons were in place.

"Alice, where have you been?" asked Mother. "You missed the Juniors competition. . . ."

"There was this lickety-split boy who won," interrupted Arthur.

"Oh, I'm sorry I missed it. I was at the church booth getting a slice of pie," said Alice with a special smile for Arthur. Father, who was still suspicious about her absence, caught Alice's smile. Suddenly he opened his mouth, as if to say something. All at once he understood. He looked at Alice, who smiled back. She knew he had figured out who Alan was.

"Did he say anything?" asked Abbie.

"No," said Grandpa. "And neither did I, until today. Everyone talked about the mystery cornhusking champion for quite awhile. They never saw him again and they never knew who he was."

"Did you keep the trophy, Grandma?" asked Zack.

"Yes, I did," replied Grandma. "It's hidden in the attic."

"Let's get it out!" said Emily.

Ask Yourself

1. Why do you think girls didn't enter corn husking contests?

2. How was cornhusking a sport?

3. Are there are any competitions today that boys or girls are not allowed to enter? If so, why?

—With Shelby Myers-Verhage

BATTLE OF THE BANGBOARDS

Imagine playing basketball with an ear of corn. You aim. You shoot. You bank it off the back of a board on a corn wagon.

Way to go Elmer! The national cornhusking champion of 1935, Elmer Carlson, poses for photographers in Indiana.

"BANG! BANG, BANG" was the sound coming from the field. No, it wasn't hunters shooting at pheasants, but farmers husking. "Bang" was the sound of an ear of husked corn hitting the bangboard side of a corn wagon. Before combines came along in the mid-1940s to harvest corn, farmers picked and husked corn by hand. They walked down a row, grasped each ear of corn, tore off the husks, and tossed the husked ear into the wagon. The huskers moved along at a pretty good pace. The "bang, bang, bang" on the bangboard told you just how fast.

Farmers often husked 200 or more bushels in one day with the help of hired hands or family members. Usually only men husked the corn, but women husked once in a while. Cornhusking took more time than any other farming job, often lasting about a month if there were only a few days of bad weather. Schools closed during husking season so that kids could help!

At times, farm families held cornhusking bees and invited their neighbors to help with the husking. They loaded picked corn into piles in a barn. Then people gathered around and husked each ear of corn. Often they sang songs, held dances, ate lots of food, and offered contests for the fastest huskers.

Rural athletes

Iowan Henry A. Wallace was a farmer who published a farming magazine called *Wallaces' Farmer*. Wallace wanted to do something for those farmers who spent so much time husking their corn,

so he decided to hold a contest to see who was the best and the fastest corn husker in the state. The contest would be like an athletic event, because Wallace believed that corn huskers were "rural athletes." He also hoped that the contests would help farmers in improving their own corn husking skills. The husking could seem more fun than the hard work it really was.

In 1923, *Wallaces Farmer* hosted Iowa's first cornhusking contest. This contest grew into a national competition in 1924 with most other midwestern states competing. Only men could enter (officials said it was because mostly men husked corn anyway). The contests lasted for one-hour and twenty minutes. The man who husked the most corn won. Junior contests were held for teen-age boys.

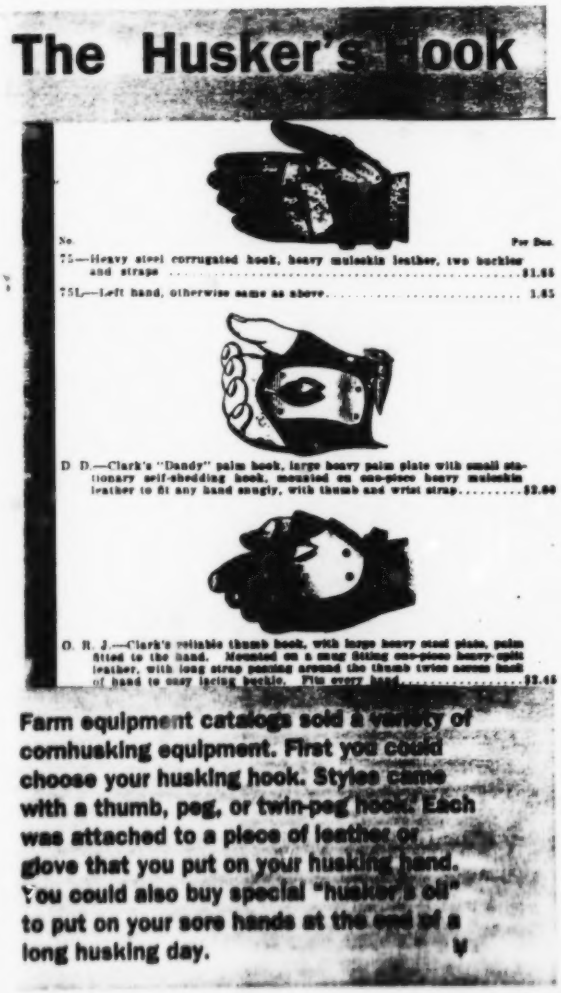
People came from all over America to see the cornhusking contests. As many as 100,000 gathered to see their favorite huskers at national contests. NBC radio broadcast contests nationwide. Farm companies hosted booths of new equipment and supplies for farmers. Church groups sponsored food booths, and musicians played for the crowning of husking queens.

Husking heroes

After the contests, winners were treated like athletic champions. Companies asked them to help sell everything from steak restaurants to insurance policies. One national winner almost signed up to do a Hollywood movie on cornhusking, but contest officials did not allow it. Newspapers sponsored cash prizes and trophies for the winners. Sometimes they even gave the winners turkeys as prizes!

Cornhusking contests were postponed in 1942 after World War II started. Soon after that, combines blew the whistle on cornhusking by hand. A good corn husker could pick by hand 100 bushels in one day. Now combines pick 800 bushels per hour. Husking by hand is a thing of the past.

By Shelby Myers-Verhage


The Husker's Hook
No. Per Doz.
75—Heavy steel corrugated hook, heavy muleskin leather, two buckles and straps $1.65
75L—Left hand, otherwise same as above 1.65
D. D.—Clark's "Dandy" palm hook, large heavy palm plate with small stationary self-shedding hook, mounted on one-piece heavy muleskin leather to fit any hand snugly, with thumb and wrist strap $2.00
O. K. J.—Clark's reliable thumb hook, with large heavy steel plate, palm fitted to the hand. Mounted on a snug fitting one-piece heavy split leather, with long strap passing around the thumb twice across back of hand to easy lacing buckle. Fits every hand $2.45
Farm equipment catalogs sold a variety of cornhusking equipment. First you could choose your husking hook. Styles came with a thumb, peg, or twin-peg hook. Each was attached to a piece of leather or glove that you put on your husking hand. You could also buy special "husker's oil" to put on your sore hands at the end of a long husking day.

OLD PLACES

Pretty Palaces of Sioux City

In 1888 the carpenters used so much corn and grain to decorate the outside walls of the corn palace that not a single square inch of wood was left uncovered (except for the flagpoles).

Nope. No kings. No bows and arrows. No Princess Di. This is an AMERICAN palace. You may have heard of the great Corn Palace in South Dakota. It's a popular tourist stop where you can take photos, buy silly souvenirs, and ooh and ahh at a huge building made out of corn. Well, South Dakota got the idea from Sioux City, Iowa.

About a hundred years ago, Sioux City was growing corn, corn, corn. The Sioux City farmers were proud and happy about their huge harvests. Sioux City had grown in size, too. In 1880 about 7,000 people lived there, but by 1887 the population was over 30,000. Some citizens believed the city might become as important as Chicago. They wanted to celebrate their success and hard work.

But how should they celebrate? The best idea was to build a corn palace. It had never been done anywhere in the world. People loved the idea. The more they thought about it, the more they realized how important corn was.

How to build a palace

So the citizens of Sioux City got busy. For six days, 46 men sawed and hammered. They built square towers on the corners of the palace, and arches over its entrances.

And next came the corn! The plan was to cover the outside of the palace with the kinds of crops grown around Sioux City.

The Winnebago Indians sold 5,000 bushels of Indian corn to the palace-builders for decorations. Indian corn was blue, purple, red, and white. They also used 15,000 more bushels of yellow corn. The autumn colors would make beautiful designs.

Inside the palace, local artists twisted and arranged nature's products into works of art. A huge spider made of carrots hung on a web made of corn silk. For the walls, artists wove scenes of Indians in canoes and buffalo in meadows.

Sioux City couldn't wait until the palace was ready. At special corn parties, women wore corn necklaces, and men wore cornhusk neckties.Residents wrote songs and poems about corn. Storekeepers filled their windows with pumpkins and harvest scenes, as we do now at Thanksgiving and Halloween. There had never been a celebration like this one in Sioux City.

The big day

On a crisp fall day in 1887 the palace and festival opened. A few days later, covered wagons and groups of Winnebago, Sioux, and Omaha Indians paraded down the streets. At night, fireworks boomed overhead. Passenger trains to Sioux City added extra cars to carry all the crowds into town.

In Chicago, New York, and London, people opened up their newspapers and magazines, and found stories about the Corn Palace in Iowa. More than 130,000 people saw the Corn Palace before the festival ended a week later.

The palace was torn down, as planned. Right away the citizens of Sioux City started thinking about building another palace the next year. Every year for the next four years, a new palace was built—always more magnificent than the one before.

In the spring of 1892 the nearby Big Floyd River flooded. People in Sioux City had to clean up after the flood, and couldn't afford to build another corn palace. For Sioux City, the Corn Palace days were over. But for the five years between 1887 and 1891, thousands of curious Americans traveled there to see why corn ruled in Sioux City.

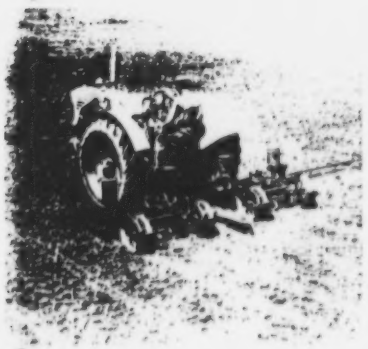
Each year between 1887 and 1892, a new corn palace was built in Sioux City. In 1890 a giant globe of the world topped the palace. Each country on the globe was outlined with kernels of corn. Inside the palace, the ceiling was an imitation sky at night. Electric lights shone like stars and added to the wonderful effect. At the time, few Iowans had electric lights in their homes. Visitors were wowed by the show!

Plowing in the Past Game

Indians in Iowa raised crops in the damp, soft soil along the rivers of Iowa long before European Americans arrived. The Indians used buffalo bone tools to harvest crops.

In the 1830s, Iowa's first European American settlers arrived with new inventions for planting corn and other crops. Machines were run by hand, by oxen or horses, and finally steam engines. Farm machinery grew up with the state, whose farmers were always eager for anything that helped them get more work done.

Read the description of farm machinery below. Match each description with the photograph or drawing. Write your answers on the lines. Answers on page 30.



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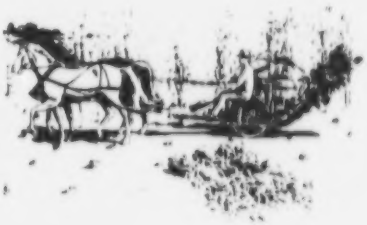

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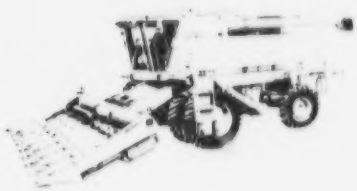

4 ___

A **The sharp wheel-shaped piece on this plow cut into the surface of the ground to help the plow blade move through the soil more easily.**

B **This sulky plow pulled by horses could plow seven acres a day. "Sulky" is the word used for a horse-drawn machine. Farmers welcomed a chance to "farm sitting down." The plow was wide enough to do two rows at once.**

C **Sometimes farmers harvested the whole corn plant at once. Corn stalks are heavy, and setting them up in a bundle was back-breaking work. A machine to cut down and tie corn stalks into bundles helped make the harvesting of corn faster and easier. But the bundles still had to be lifted, stacked, and tied into shocks.**

D **Some call it a "fire breathing dragon," but combines revolutionized corn harvesting. These powerful and expensive machines can harvest up to 16 rows of corn at one time.**

27

By Jean C. Florman

WHO'S WHO

Here's to the folks who have made a difference to the Iowa corn industry and the world!

NAME: Henry A. Wallace
LIVED: 1888-1965
DESCRIPTION: Like his father and grandfather, he farmed, experimented with seed corn, and published Wallaces' Farmer, an important magazine for American farmers. At the age of six, Wallace became interested in plant breeding, and he published his first article at age 19.
KNOWN TO SPEND TIME IN: Winterset, where he was born on his family's farm and later in Ames, where he attended what is now Iowa State University.
KNOWN FOR: Developing high-yield hybrid seed corn and establishing the Pioneer Hi-Bred Corn Company in 1926. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Wallace to be U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Wallace later served as vice-president.
LAST HEARD SAYING: "I will try to do my part. . . . No doubt I shall make many mistakes, but I hope it can always be said that I have done the best I knew."

NAME: Roswell ("Bob") Garst
LIVED: 1898-1977
DESCRIPTION: Outspoken businessman who was convinced that world problems could be solved by new farming techniques.
KNOWN TO SPEND TIME IN: Coon Rapids, where he worked on his parents' farm, had corncob fights with his brother, went to school, and enjoyed barn dances.
KNOWN FOR: Convincing American farmers that using hybrid seed corn developed by Henry A. Wallace's company would mean more and better corn. From the 1940s until his death, Garst strongly encouraged and helped establish peaceful cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union.
LAST HEARD SAYING: "If it is sensible to trade information on the peaceful uses of the atom, then it is equally sensible for the world to trade information about how to produce more food. I would therefore propose a toast: 'Peace through corn.'"

NAME: Diane and Kent Whealy
LIVED: 1975-present
DESCRIPTION: Seed Savers Exchange is a farm owned and organized by the Whealys. They raise rare varieties of vegetables and fruit from "heritage" seeds that often have been passed down in families.
KNOWN TO SPEND TIME IN: The countryside near Decorah
KNOWN FOR: Saving thousands of kinds of farm plants and animals that might have been lost. Some of the varieties they have saved include: pink tomatoes, Golly Hearts, and Bill Jump's Soup Pea. They exchange seeds with people around the world who are raising old-fashioned varieties.
LAST HEARD SAYING: "When we walk through the garden, we feel like we're walking through the history of agriculture on this planet. It's also important because a diverse world is a more attractive world."

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History Makers

Rachel Sandler, a fifth grader at Rolling Green Elementary School in Urbandal, sent us one of her poems about Iowa. We added a few illustrations to her fine poem!

IOWA

by Rachel Sandler

Urbandale, Iowa

Iowa is a state so grand,
It's the greatest in all the land.
Filled with lots of history,
To list would be a difficulty.
Some crops of Iowa are corn and soybeans.
They are used to suit your needs.
We manufacture quite a lot,
From machinery to lots of food products.
The population was 2,913,387 in 1980,
And 52 persons per square mile was the density.
On December 18, 1846, it became the 29th state.
It was a very special date.
With the tree being oak and flower being the Wild Rose,
you might get the hinch,
That our state bird is the Eastern Goldfinch.
"Our Liberties We Prize And Our Rights We Will Maintain" is our motto,
We are also famous for the Iowa Lotto.
We have 2 senators and 5 people to represent us,
Des Moines is the capital of thus.
Iowa is a state in the midwestern part,
And it will always have a place in my heart

WE WANT YOU for a history maker. Want to see your stories, poetry, or art published in *The Goldfinch*? Send your writing or art about Iowa to: History Makers, *The Goldfinch*, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Art by Mary Trotton

JOKES

We at the Goldfinch have spent the last few weeks STALKING as many corn jokes as we could find. Here are a couple of the best, or worst, ones:

Why did the ear of corn walk to the grocery store?
Because it didn't have change for the bus.

What's the scariest vegetable?
Corn on the Blob

What advice did the farmer give to his son:
Always do a job right. Never cut CORNers

What rank do most ears of corn hold in the army?
Kernel! (Colonel)

What's an ear of corn's favorite TV show?
LA Straw

Why did the ear of corn cross the road?
Because it was stapled to the chicken!

Send us your own jokes! We're all EARS!
The Goldfinch, Ha! Ha! Department
State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Answers

Page 15: cob, popcorn, cornbread, yield, harvest; MYSTERY WORD—hybrid.
Page 26: (1) b; (2) c; (3) a; (4) d.

All About Cobs

What do you do with your corncobs? In 19th century Iowa, kids tossed them back and forth like snowballs. According to one historian, here's how they did it: ". . . rivals would break each cob in half and dip the pieces in water for greater weight and accuracy. One could hear the near-misses 'whoosh' past and at times feel the spray of water." Reports say that during the Civil War (1861-1865), soldiers also engaged in corncob battles.

Other uses for corncobs included:

- **frontier back scratchers**
- **fishing bobbers (catfish like corn on the end of the fishing line)**

But our favorite use for a corn cob: tossing it at bats and watching them "dip and swirl" and following the cob as if it was a tasty insect! ¥

Read More About Corn and Agriculture in Iowa history in these back issues of *The Goldfinch*: Early Agriculture; Agricultural Fairs; Life on Iowa's Prairies; Family Farm; and The Wallaces of Iowa. ¥

The Roost

THANKS FOR INVITING ME OVER FOR DINNER, ROSIE. WHAT'S ON THE MENU?
CORN!
ZOOOMM!!
OH BOY! WHAT A FEAST!
ROSIE, THIS IS DEEELICIOUS. BUT...
CHOMP
SLOBBER
...WHERE'S THE CORN?!
JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING HERE IS MADE OUT OF CORN.
PING!
THE COOKIES, SODA, CAKE, CANDY BARS, PANCAKES ~~ EVEN THE HAMBURGERS WERE MADE FROM CORN-FED ANIMALS!
GOLDIE, EVEN YOU ARE MADE FROM CORN!!
OH YEA?! WELL YOU'RE A PRETTY CORNY KID YOURSELF, ROSIE!
JERRY BROWN

The Goldfinch

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